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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000699

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/22/2017  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: CEC CHAIRMAN: CEC PREPARED FOR ELECTIONS

REF: A. JERUSALEM 00424  
[1](#)B. 2007 JERUSALEM 01898  
[1](#)C. 2007 JERUSALEM 01852

Classified By: Acting Principal Officer, Thomas M. Duffy, per reasons 1  
.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Central Election Commission (CEC) Chairman Hanna Nasir told international donors from the Election Reform Support Group (ERSG) that the CEC is prepared to hold presidential and legislative elections with 60 days notice, but will need a rapid, major cash infusion when elections are called. Nasir said the PA now supports basic CEC operating costs, so the CEC does not face the same cash crunch it experienced before June 2007, but he hopes donors will fund training and other activities. Nasir reviewed the 2007 General Elections Law that was adopted by Presidential decree and said there will be objections to the requirements that all candidates recognize the PLO as the sole representative of the Palestinian people and that presidential candidates obtain certificates of good conduct. Nasir told PolCouns he was not comfortable with the CEC administering a referendum without a specific law clarifying referendum details. He noted that Palestinian political parties will probably resist the political parties law, largely because it requires them to publish sensitive financial information. Nasir said he is trying to convince all Palestinian parties -- particularly Hamas -- that the CEC is an apolitical body. He said he does not know what effect a Fatah/Hamas reconciliation would have on the elections law or the timing of elections. End Summary.

CEC: OPERATING COSTS COVERED;  
PREPARED TO CONDUCT ELECTIONS  
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[1](#)2. (C) Palestinian Central Elections Commission (CEC) Chairman Hanna Nasir and Chief Electoral Officer Hisham Kuhail briefed international donors of the Election Reform Support Group (ERSG) April 21. Nasir said he is confident the CEC has the capacity to conduct presidential and legislative elections with 60 days notice, but it will need significant and immediate donor support if/when elections are called. He added that by mid-May the CEC will also have the capacity to conduct municipal elections. Nasir stressed the CEC is involved only in preparing for elections and not the decision to hold them or their timing. Citing recent Hamas press statements that it will not allow the CEC to operate in the Gaza Strip, Nasir said he has used the CEC website to underscore that the CEC is an apolitical, professional body.

[1](#)3. (C) Nasir welcomed PA support for the CEC's daily operational costs for the past two months, which he said, means external support is not needed to pay salaries and rents. Instead, he said, he wants donor funding for training, voter education, and other elections-gear

activities. The CEC coordinated its list of potential activities for consideration to the donors with the Palestinian Reform and Development Program (PRDP) and the Ministry of Planning. (Note: List at the Consulate's classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/jerusalem/index.cfm> under the link for Political Reporting Attachments. End note.)

LAWS: 2007 ELECTIONS;  
REFERENDUM; POLITICAL PARTIES  
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14. (C) Nasir said based on the 2007 elections law that future Palestinian legislative elections will be fully proportional representation (ref B) in contrast to the former mixed system that featured a combination of individual districts along with proportional representation. (Note: Election Law amendments at the Consulate's classified website at <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/nea/jerusalem/index.cfm> under the link for Political Reporting Attachments. End note.) He said the CEC is prepared to administer elections based on this revised law or on the previous law, recognizing that the new law was adopted by Presidential decree and that the parties may renegotiate the electoral system. He added that he does not believe Hamas will object to proportional representation, although it is widely blamed for Fatah's 2006 electoral loss, and expects the next legislative elections to be based on proportional representation. He said presidential elections are not automatic for 2010; they must be called. He pointed out that President Abbas could stall the elections for political reasons, such as negotiations with the Israelis, although he doubts Abbas will do so.

15. (C) Nasir said he is not comfortable with all aspects of  
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the 2007 law. The new law requires all candidates to uphold the PLO as the sole, legitimate representative of the Palestinian people, which was not in the 2005 law. Hamas won the most seats in 2006, but does not accept the PLO and this issue, he said, is the crux of the Hamas-Fatah conflict. The 2007 elections law also requires presidential candidates to obtain a PA Ministry of Interior certificate of good conduct, but does not define "good conduct," which Nasir said, leaves the requirement easily abused. He said he preferred language in an earlier draft, which the CEC reviewed, requiring that presidential candidates not have been convicted of a felony.

16. (C) Nasir said if the president decides to hold a referendum, it would be administered by the CEC, but there is no referendum law. Nasir said he does not want the CEC to be responsible for administering a poorly crafted referendum, and a new referendum law is needed. Nasir told PolCouns he saw a political parties draft law that addressed political activities and financial transparency, but does not expect it to be adopted as is, since most political parties will be reluctant to publish their finances.  
DUFFY